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AUTHOR Campbell, Dale F.
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ABSTRACT

Three issues concerning the provision of occupational education in the community college are addressed in this paper. First, trends in business and industry are identified which point to an increased role for the colleges in training skilled technicians for high-technology industries. The problems of skilled labor shortages and lack of international competitiveness are highlighted, and a proposal for the development of a national policy on human resources and economic development is outlined. Second, five major issues faced by Texas are addressed: (1) the community college mission in the area of vocational education; (2) the identification of state needs and institutional responsibility for providing training; (3) the establishment of state policies for economic development and manpower training; (4) the determination of the relationship between industry and community colleges; and (5) the establishment of sources of funding for programs to train skilled workers. Third, potential solutions to these problems are proposed based on experiences in other states. The paper recommends that community colleges work as partners with industry to achieve economic development; that colleges identify themselves as the main deliverers of skilled training; that input on college role in human resource development be provided; and that new programs be started with state support to address industry needs for skilled workers. (HB)

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Postsecondary Occupational Education: National Trends, Issues, and Potential Implications for Texas Public Community/Junior Colleges

by

Dale F. Campbell

Address delivered to the February, 1982 Mid Winter conference of the Texas Public Community/Junior College Association (Presidents' Association) in Austin

Dale F. Campbell is state President, Texas Technical Society, national President, Council for Occupational Education of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, and former Dean of Instruction, Vernon Regional Junior College, Wichita Falls, Texas.

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Postsecondary Occupational Education:
National Trends, Issues, and Potential Implications
for Texas Public Community/Junior Colleges

When preparing to address this topic, it struck me that the breadth of the subject almost gave me a license to discuss with you almost any issue on whose enrollment now comprises 63% community college credit population nationwide. I can assure you that I'm not going to attempt such an impossible feat, particularly in a session immediately following lunch.

Rather, I would first like to review trends in business and industry which point to an increased role your colleges can play as a national resource in addressing the need for skilled technicians in high technology, critical manpower shortage occupations.

Secondly, I will examine some issues we face in Texas and our colleges due to shortages of technicians--loss of faculty to industry, breaking of your college salary schedules, concern by the Texas Junior College Teachers Association over differential pay questions (20-50% salary erosion in comparison with industry in sister sunbelt states), program curtailments of program contents to basic industrial art content rather than needed technical skills, or perhaps worse inactive programs due to budget limitations.

Third, Potential Implications - I will examine some techniques and methods which have been successful in other states and propose a plan of action to help address these issues in Texas. Our panel Dr. Wilbur A. Bass, President, Brazosport College, Lake Jackson and Dr. Carl M. Nelson, President, Texarkana Community College, Texarkana will comment on the impact of the proposals at the local level.

TRENDS. I am sure by now you have heard the old joke about the plumber who presented the doctor a bill for $60.00. The doctor mused that the repairman had not even been there an hour, and said to him, "Man, I'm a doctor, and I don't even make that much money." The plumber promptly replied, "Neither did I when I was a doctor."

The story is no longer funny--particularly when you are attempting to recruit a skilled technician from industry to your faculty. Nor is it laughable in terms of the lost productivity of our economy when we experience skilled labor shortages. Ultimately the "value-added" for goods and services is passed on to us as the consumers in increased prices in what has been called the ultimate in the "free agent draft."

The magnitude of this national problem is perhaps best conveyed in a report by the American Electronics Association, Technical Employment Projections, 1981-1983-1985 published last year.

"Though there are many important issues worth our collective effort--restoration of restricted stock options, reduction in capital gains taxes--as I look at the next ten years, I worry about international competition. If we lose the battle in the marketplace, we will lose because we do not have the quantity of trained people necessary to keep leadership in the industry. This is the single most important issue our industry faces--bar none! Other things will slow us down and make it tougher, but we can still win. The lack of qualified technical people, however, means we cannot win."

We have all heard much recently about the United States losing its advantage in the world market. From 1967 to 1976, for example, Germany's output per personhour was three times that of the U.S. and Japan was almost five times. Over the next six years, loans and subsidies of 1.7 billion are being made by foreign governments and to semi-conductor industries in support of new technology and technical human resources.

These trends are also alarming from a true national security standpoint. With the vast majority of hardware military now on the cutting edge of high technology, how qualified are our recruits operating and maintaining that equipment? We cannot afford another 3 Mile Island due to unskilled labor. The machining trade alone will experience a manpower shortage of from estimates over 120,000 to 200,000 for the decade. Who is going to build and provide the equipment maintenance for the proposed build up

of the America's military? Ray Tune, industrial recruiter and strong promoter of vocational education stated at recent Advisory Council public hearing on Voc Ed, "Remember the efforts of Rosie the Riveter in World War II...today we would have to revise the child labor laws so young people could go to work in machine shops to turn out the equipment that we would need...if we had a war."

The American Electronics Association concludes with the following: "The technical manpower shortage is not, however, a problem that the American Electronics Association or even many industry and professional associations can resolve. Rather, it is first going to take recognition by Congress and by state and local governments who provide major educational policy directions that there is a problem and, second, that we must take corrective action to remedy it.

It is also going to take recognition by the public and the youth of this country of the important role high technology plays in keeping our world leadership position--recognition that electronics industries have provided an abundance of attractive and challenging jobs in the past decade, that we will continue to do so, but that our ability is predicated on being able to employ adequate numbers of technical people."

This provides some of the background to Dale Parnell, President, American Association of Community and Junior Colleges charge,

to the Council for Occupational Education with the current deliberations on the reauthorization of Voc-Ed and CETA, to act as a "think tank" for AACJC on a proposed National Policy for Employment and Training.

This past October, in Twin Falls, Idaho, the Board of Directors and membership assembled of COE approved in principle a resolution calling for a clear National Policy on Human Resources and Economic Development consisting of two proposed pieces of legislation:
(1) National High Technology Technician Training Act, and
(2) Reserve Non-Commissioned Officer Training Corps Act. The latter has been endorsed by the AACJC Governmental Affairs Commission and is pending introduction in both houses of Congress retitled Enlisted Reserve Educational Assistance Act (patterned after ROTC) developed for community, technical, and junior colleges to train recruits for the Armed Forces while preparing for active duty. Recruits would enter military service with a rank of E-4 or E-5. Andy Korim, Community College of Alleghany County, Pittsburgh has done some exemplary work in drafting the legislation as have Frank Mensel, Association of Community College Trustees and Pattie Powell, Chairman of the Board, Dallas County Community College District with their support.

Much of the above work has laid the foundation for an Adult Employment Development and Training Act proposed by Dale Parnell. A concept paper is now being drafted on "Putting the Nation to Work," focusing on the capacity of community colleges as an in place national resource which proposes needed additional incentives

to maximize our efforts (i.e. tax benefits for business/industrial firms and faculty respectively for sabbaticals to industry for upgrade training. Regardless of your personal philosophy on the proposed new federalism, there are real issues of national significance where community colleges, through their occupational programs, are in a unique position to make a major contribution to our economic revitalization and the strengthening of our national defense.

But what are the ISSUES for Texas? For our discussions today, I will focus on five areas: 1) mission, 2) identity, 3) state policy, 4) industrial commission linkages, and 5) program support.

ISSUE

1) Mission. There continues open concern and debate among the leadership over what should be the mission and role of community and technical colleges. A November 4, 1981 Chronicle for Higher Education byline reads "California Community Colleges Attacked: Too Much Growth in the Wrong Direction." The original role of the California colleges were to prepare students to transfer; now two-thirds are enrolled in vocational courses.

The recent report of the Brookings Institution Financing Community Colleges - An Economic Perspective states that the future viability of vocational-technical programs in public community colleges is dependent upon their ability to 1) provide quality equipment and instruction, 2) adapt to changing labor markets and student interests, and 3) cope with increased competition from proprietary

schools and industry-based training.

2) Issue-Identity. In the program areas of computer, drafting, engineering, laser, and machining occupations, who do you think the American Electronics Association looks towards to be its primary deliverer of technical training in Texas? Or when you say technical training in Texas, who does industry think of? No. Surprisingly it is not Texas State Technical Institute. First, industry is looking to proprietary - private vocational schools, second to direct industry training, in house Human Resources Development programs, third, the community junior college, and fourth to the military. What are the characteristics of proproprietary vocational programs? They are typically clock hour intensive, career laddered with multiple exit options. There are recent reports they are again flourishing and increasing in numbers. Despite the fact that community colleges provide over 90% of the post secondary occupational education public training in Texas, there seems to be a lack of full recognition by industry of our contributions in the state.

Who is primarily responsible for what in Texas? I commend foresight of the 68th Legislature in authorizing an independent study to recommend an articulated non-duplicative system for voc-ed in Texas. Preliminary reports from the Research Triangle Institute indicates there are approximately 18 public entities in Texas involved in some aspects of postsecondary occupational education.

Texas Community Colleges and the TSTI System have a proven record of service, as is our mission, in this area. Recent demographic data and reports of the Texas 2000 Commission confirm the need for a shift in the states program priorities and resources to address needs of an older population. For by the year 2000, the median age for our population nationally will increase from 29-36. By the end of the decade, the 24-44 age group will comprise 77% of the population and fill 53% of the jobs in the labor force.

In Texas, the fastest growing groups will be 35-49 years of age and over 65 years. The future is bright for adult occupational skill-training in Texas. However, how long as taxpayers can we continue to approve high cost technology programs (i.e. instrumentation, robotics, diesel) in what can be perceived as duplicate programs in various localities in the state? Or should we urge reconsideration of reaffirming the initial charge of TSTI to primarily address training for these high cost occupations? Or should we do as some states, such as Kentucky, and coordinate mobile training every 3 years in occupations such as these until basic demand is met in that area of the state? Community colleges in turn would focus on more traditional occupational skill training. Or should Texas explore the feasiblity of designating each new high technology program approved in the state as a model pilot training center? Under this approach, the designated center would train faculty for other colleges for proper curriculum dissemination and techniques of equipment operation and maintenance if the

program was approved in another location of the state (i.e. South Carolina designates one college in the state as its "Center for Robotics").

3) Issue - State Policy. The Advisory Council for Technical Vocational Education in Texas recently "encouraged the Governor's Office to take the lead in developing policies that will address the state's economic development, education, and training needs." Should Texas community colleges seek recognition as the presumptive deliverer of skilled training in the state?

Consider North Carolina's policy of promoting balanced economic growth where the comprehensive community colleges are seen as the most single important element in the Governor's program of economic development.

4) Issue - Linkages With Industrial Commission/Chamber of Commerce. Texas 2000 projects that 160,000 new jobs will have to be created each year to accomodate what could be 1 out of 12 people residing in the state by the year 2000. Despite my perhaps personal support of Austin bumper stickers which display the skyline and say "No Vacancy." The relevant question is how do we manage that growth? A 1979 survey by the Joint Economic Committee found that the availability of skilled workers was found to be the most significant factor contributing to a state or region's economic development. This again is part of our mission.

How close are your ties with the Texas Industrial Commission for new industry and your local chambers of commerce? Or have you been caught in the web of industry relocating to your area based upon overzealous promises? Ultimately, your institution is blamed after minimum industrial start-up appropriations are exhausted for not being responsive in a non-base funding year which industry has difficulty understanding.

Consider the organization of the state of North Carolina where regional offices of the Department of Commerce houses not only their industrial developers, but representatives of the community college system. Staffs work together in the initial recruitment and providing initial and continued upgrade retaining services to industry.

5) Issue - Program Support. The recent Brooking Institution report on Financing Community Colleges: An Economic Perspective recommends that "vocational programs providing highly skilled specific training for particular firms should receive support from those firms. An exception would occur if the course offerings are part of a states economic development plan." Again I'll cite the North Carolina model.

Due to the interest of the General Assembly in the economic development program of the state, community colleges are recognized for the vital role they play in implementing the policy of balanced economic growth. Special appropriations have been established for

1) updating the technical training equipment inventory, 2) pre-funding state priority programs at hard-to-fill occupations, 3) establishment of Cooperative Industrial Training Centers enabling colleges greater flexibility to contract with industry for in-plant training to meet their local upgrade training needs, 4) related and supplemental instruction of formal apprenticeship, 5) Educational/Industrial Leave with pay for up to 12 consecutive weeks enabling technical faculty to return to industry for upgrade training.

Potential Implications. The following are suggested proposals given for your consideration in the areas of 1) identity, 2) mission and policy, 3) Department of Commerce, and 4) program support.

- Identity. Following the lead of the Special Focus Issue on Occupational Education for the April Issue for Community Junior College Journal, Texas Technical Society will publish a special issue later this year in the TTS Journal on "Community/Junior Colleges: Partners in Texas' Economic Development." Publication has been endorsed by Deans and Directors and we are also asking you to join as a co-sponsor highlighting your successful exemplary programs in preparation for distribution to Boards of Trustees, Chambers of Commerce, community leaders, and the legislature. Business and industry reps and graduates will be the primary authors speaking of the benefits of your programs.

- Mission and Policy. I urge your associations full support and work in formulating a state policy which will recognize community colleges unique role to the economic development of the state. It is important to convey to the Texas Study contractor your readiness and desire to be the presumptive deliver of skill training for the state in its economic development initiatives, given the necessary resources to do the job.

- Department of Commerce. Recommend TPC/JCA provide input on the effective role community colleges can play in human resources development when coupled to Governor Clement's Blue Ribbon Task Force seeking to merge the Industrial Commission with Texas Film Commission, Texas Tourist Development Agency into a Texas Department of Commerce.

- Program Support. Urge Legislative Committee work with Deans and Directors, Texas Technical Society in drafting legislative proposals in support of new program start-up in critical shortage occupations and special funding for leave with industry based upon contributions of Texas Public Community Junior Colleges to the state. Institutional research must be redefined to report our productivity to our communities and state through economic impact studies in quantifiable measures. Enrollment growth may not be desireous by all in Texas or supported in the legislature, but we do all want a healthy balanced economy. I know many of you are asking, can such an effort succeed with the Governors' pressure to reduce state expenditures. Is such a flip-flop possible?

When you return to your offices, on your desks you will have Dale Parnell's AACJC Letter which reports such a flip-flop by California Governor Edmund Brown, Jr. He recently proposed another $13 million to support occupational education through community colleges and adult programs. The proposal is in response to the successes of the 1979 California Worksite Education and Training Act. The State Employment Development Department identifies critical skill shortage areas, then requests that community colleges train workers for those specific jobs.

Our position is that community and technical colleges are in the best position in the nation to take the lead in each state, as they have in North Carolina and can in Texas, to become the primary delivery system to provide skilled technician training for the human resources component in each respective states economic development or renewal program.

Though there is no single model for community colleges role in a state economic development policy given regional differences and approaches of governance, perhaps some of North Carolina's initiatives and successes could be a model framework to not only us, but other states and colleges in furthering the economic development of their respective states.

Colleges hesitant over mission questions and budget priorities to mount the challenge will be quickly supplanted by other public entities or private concerns as evidenced by the American Electronics Association report, who are more than willing to expand their mission.

This is a unique time in the history of the community college movement for the "peoples college" to further establish its role as an effective partner in each respective states human resource and economic development program. I am confident that Texas community colleges will be in the forefront of this movement.

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